



Co-Sponsored by the Rhode Island Department of  
Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals and  
the Recovery Month Planning Coalition

# Save the Date



## September is National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month

Come join the voices of recovery: Real People, Real Recovery. We are having a free information and entertainment event on **Saturday, September 20, 2008 from 2 to 5 pm** at WaterFire, on the Corner of Canal and Steeple Street in Providence.

- Food
- Information Table
- Music
- Speakers
- Children's Activities
- Recovery Quilt
- Vigil honoring those who died from addiction

Department of Mental Health, Retardation & Hospitals  
Division of Behavioral Healthcare Services  
14 Harrington Road—Barry Hall  
Cranston, RI 02920

Phone: 401-462-4680  
Fax: 401-462-6078  
Website: [www.mhrh.ri.gov](http://www.mhrh.ri.gov)

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## Kerr: He brings a solid résumé to the job

September 10, 2008

The picture with Patrick Kennedy is on Herb Ramay's desk in his office on Wilson Street in Providence. He never expected to have an office. And he sure didn't expect to be hanging out with Patrick Kennedy.

"From the basement of a crack house to Congressman Kennedy's office," says Ramay.

That's the unlikely story. There are people in the ACI right now who wouldn't believe it. They were betting that Ramay would soon be back among them.

"I spent a great deal of my life in and out of prison," he says.

Say, from the age of 8 to the age of 46. His first offense was not going to school. He worked his way from a DCYF facility to the Training School to the ACI. He combined a serious drug habit with a lot of breaking and entering. Freedom was just another word for a chance to screw up.

So the recovery house on Wilson Street in Providence is where the bad stuff gets turned back on itself. It's in Ramay's old neighborhood.

"I did all my dirt in this area. Now, I'm getting clean in this area."

Ramay walks to work past reminders of buying and using and getting busted. And he brings all of it in the door with him, all the bad memories and hard lessons. That's why, when he sits down for the 7:30 morning meeting with the residents, his credentials are rock solid.

He's a peer counselor. He knows whereof he speaks when dealing with addiction's disasters.

He has been free for 3 ½ years, the longest period since the first eight years of his life. He was paroled in 2005 and went to the culinary training program at Amos House. He got a job at Crossroads Rhode Island. He had a relapse, lost his job and slept in cars and abandoned buildings. He suffered a heroin overdose in May 2006.

"Then, somehow, the Providence Center found me."

He has his list of recovery programs. He went in, came out, bought drugs. Maybe, this time, the difference was the loss of his fourth sister to drugs. He went to the long-term substance abuse residential treatment program that the Providence Center runs in Pascoag. He was there for nine months. He put on some weight and says he found direction. He had never found direction before.

Now, he works with the residents at the recovery house on Wilson Street. They talk about getting through the day.

“I’m staying clean, staying sober, going to meetings, dealing with the government,” says one resident to knowing nods from around the table during yesterday morning’s meeting.

Through District Court in Providence, a place he knew primarily while in handcuffs, Ramay also works with adolescents who appear on the verge of making some very familiar, very dumb mistakes. He can tell them exactly where they’re going if they don’t get it together.

“Before, all I did was exist,” he says. “Now, I’m making a difference.”

September is National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month. It is a time to consider problems that might become bigger problems. The Rhode Island Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals and the Recovery Month Planning Coalition are presenting an afternoon of information and entertainment at Canal and Steeple streets in Providence on Sept. 20 from 2 to 5 p.m. It is a very good opportunity to talk to people who know about addiction from every angle you can imagine.

There will be food, music, information tables, speakers and children’s activities.

There will be a vigil honoring those who died from addiction.